

State Representative

# Robert D. Kuzman

District 19

Autumn, 1999



Dear Friend,

The General Assembly met for an extended Organization Day in mid-November. We considered a package of bills that week, including an economic development package that would benefit many Hoosiers throughout the state.

The 2000 session is a "short" session, meaning we will begin session January 10 and finish before March 15. We will meet for no more than 30 days during the short session.

Short sessions have two notable features. First, each House member may file only five pieces of legislation. This forces us to prioritize our legislative goals. Second, there are generally no budgetary or fiscal issues addressed during the short session. The budget is reserved for the long session when we have more time to complete this important task. **However, we are hoping to open the budget this session to consider legislation that will decrease the impact of proposed property tax increases.** Our goal is to protect homeowners by easing the tax shift to reassessment.

If you have any concerns or suggestions for change in your state government, please contact me at 1-800-382-9842.

Sincerely,



How to contact

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**Home**

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200 W. Washington St.  
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1-800-382-9842

# Reassessment: how will it affect you?

We have long anticipated a property tax shift to be instituted by the State Tax Board in response to the Supreme Court mandate to change assessment practices. The fact is simple: most homeowners cannot take on a substantial increase in their property taxes at one time. The General Assembly must identify ways to minimize the tax shift from businesses to homeowners.

Last session I supported two pieces of legislation that would have reduced the immediate impact of reassessment. I co-sponsored legislation to remove all five parts of the welfare burden from the county to the state. Legislation was passed that only addressed two of the five parts. The elimination of the other three portions would result in an average 20% decrease in property tax bills for Lake County homeowners. I also supported legislation that would have delayed property tax reassessment until we found a better solution. However, the Senate Republicans defeated this measure. Bills addressing both of these issues should be introduced again this year.

In recent discussions, many alternative approaches have been considered that would raise needed revenue for Lake County. We are currently looking into options, such as freezing the county budget at current levels and reducing the budgets of all taxing units. These ideas are intended to lower property taxes for homeowners. We have also looked into phasing in property tax increases rather than raising them all at once. These are only some possibilities facing us following the Tax Board's announcement of mandatory reassessment. I intend to do all I can to ease any proposed property tax increases for residents of House District 19.



*Rep. Kuzman discusses legislation with Rep. Chet Dobis (D-Merrillville).*

## Build Indiana Projects District 19

Lake County Fairgrounds -- \$100,250

Crown Point Fire Department ambulance and equipment-- \$100,250

Lowell Fire Department -- \$100,250

Lakes of Four Seasons Fire Department equipment -- \$100,250

Shelby Fire Department equipment -- \$33,000

Schneider Fire Department equipment -- \$33,000

Lake Dale Fire Department equipment -- \$33,000

# Educating our children

Did you know that more than 20 percent of adults read at or below a fifth grade level – far below the level needed to earn a living wage? Forty-three percent of people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty.

The Indiana General Assembly has attempted to help by appropriating \$3.9 million in funding for early intervention (K-3) reading programs. The General Assembly also provided \$6 million to replace old and worn school library books and materials.

If you know of people who would like to obtain a GED, need reading help for their child, need reading help for themselves, want to learn English as a Second Language, want to improve their employment options or who want to go from welfare to work, contact the Literacy Helpline at 1-800-267-9029. The helpline is part of the Indiana Literacy Foundation.

The Indiana Literacy Foundation sponsors statewide programs to encourage people to read. Reach Out and Read (ROAR) is a pediatric literacy initiative to help infants and children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years discover the joys of reading. Developed by pediatricians at Boston Medical Center, ROAR recruits volunteers to conduct reading circles at health facilities. Doctors “prescribe” reading to their young patients, each of whom receives a brand new book after each visit.

How are we doing?		
	Indiana	U.S.
High School Graduation Rate	87.9%	82%
College Attendance Rate	53.5%	41%
SAT Composite Score	981	1013

## Financial assistance for college

Attending college is a key factor for later career success. Indiana's future depends on good students who attend and graduate from college. Students interested in attending college may be eligible for several sources of additional funding.

- *Twenty-First Century Scholars* helps Indiana families afford a college education for their children.

For more information, call 1-800-992-2076.

- The state of Indiana also offers several scholarships including the *Indiana Higher Education Grant*, the *Hoosier Scholarship Award*, the *Minority Teacher Scholarship* and the *Nursing Scholarship*.

For more information on these scholarships, please contact the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana at 1-317-232-2350.

- The U.S. government also assists students in finding funds for college. Grants (which do not have to be repaid) and loans (which do have to be repaid) are available for eligible students. The programs include: Stafford Loans, Pell Grants, PLUS Loans, the Work-Study Program and Perkins Loans. Students must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Forms are available through high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices or by contacting the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-4FED-AID.

# Publications available

The following publications can be requested free of charge from my Statehouse office by calling toll-free 1-800-382-9842:

*Relax . . .* -- This informational booklet for senior citizens discusses a variety of issues, from taxes to health problems to leisure activities.

*Higher Education* -- A 24-page publication for those interested in pursuing a higher education degree, detailing many Indiana colleges and universities as well as occupational and vocational schools.

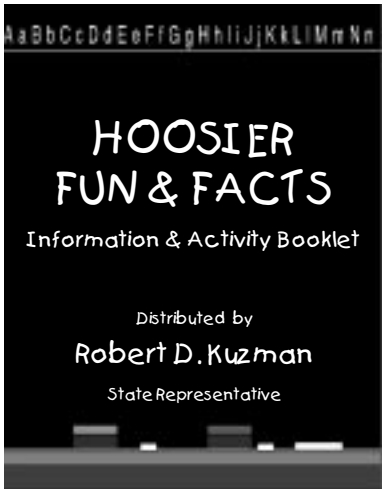
*Guide to State Agencies* -- This booklet details various agencies within Indiana state government, listing phone numbers, functions and general areas of responsibility for each of the state agencies.

*Hoosier Fun and Facts* -- Designed for elementary school-aged children, this information and activity book teaches students about their state through a combination of text, puzzles and other educational activities.

## Attention Teachers

We the People . . . Project Citizen is a civic education program for middle school students. The Indiana House of Representatives will help to facilitate the state finals on May 5, 2000. For information on how to involve your students, please contact:

Thomas Vontz  
Indiana University  
2805 E. Tenth St.  
Bloomington, IN 47408  
812-855-0467 / 800-266-3815



### State Phone Numbers

State Information . . . . .	1-800-457-8283
Indiana House . . . . .	1-800-382-9842
Indiana Senate. . . . .	1-800-382-9467
Governor's Office. . . . .	317-232-4567
Secretary of State . . . . .	317-232-6531
Motor Vehicles. . . . .	317-233-6000
Natural Resources. . . . .	1-800-622-4931
Utility Regulatory. . . . .	1-800-851-4268
State Tourism . . . . .	1-800-289-6646
Department of Correction. . . . .	1-800-680-5889
Department of Education . . . . .	317-232-6611
Department of Health . . . . .	317-233-1325
Family & Social Services . . . . .	317-233-4454

# Indiana legislators deliver tax cuts totaling \$672 million



The 1999 biennial state budget provides \$672 million in savings for Indiana taxpayers. I have detailed some of the tax cuts below.

- *Homeowners:* Property taxes on a taxpayer's principal place of residence can be deducted up to \$2,500. The deduction is located on Schedule 1 of the IT-40.
- *Senior citizens:* The income tax deduction for most seniors was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Each qualified taxpayer may take this deduction — meaning married couples may now deduct \$3,000 from their adjusted gross income. Many seniors also received an increase in the property tax deduction from \$1,000 to \$2,000.
- *Dependent children:* The income tax deduction was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500 for dependent children under age 19 and full-time students under age 24. You may reduce your Indiana adjusted gross income for each qualifying dependent.
- *Renters:* The renters' income tax deduction was increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000. This deduction is located on Schedule 1 of the IT-40 or the back of the IT-40EZ.
- *Small businesses:* Businesses will no longer have to "add-back" property taxes deducted on their federal returns.
- *Inventory tax cuts:* The inventory tax was eliminated for 87 percent of Indiana farms and businesses, saving \$129.6 million.
- *Property tax cuts:* The county welfare funds and the county welfare administration funds were eliminated from local property taxes, saving \$67.6 million.

## 2000 Page Program

Serving as a page during the 2000 session allows any child age 13 or older the opportunity to gain a firsthand glimpse of how the legislative system works.

Students will be excused from school on the day they are serving as a page and will spend the entire day at the Statehouse.

Interested students should send me their name, parent or guardian's name, address, phone number, school and two different dates when the student could come to the Statehouse between January 10 and February 29, 2000.

Please remember session is short and places fill up fast, so apply as soon as possible.

*Our mission is to create an environment for Indiana's youth that is conducive to both fun and learning, and which will stimulate student interest in government and community involvement. To that end, we plan to educate students regarding legislative processes; to give students an opportunity to meet their community leaders; to encourage student involvement in the community; and to introduce students to other students around the state.*



***Important information about  
Session 2000 inside!***

**Representative Robert D. Kuzman  
200 W. Washington St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46204**

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Representatives